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Letter to Eliza,

BY

ALBYN.

I am like a child
Tired of the playthings in the afternoon
That in the morning made him wild with joy.

PAGE 5.

HALIFAX, N. S.
PRINTED BY WILLIAM MACNAB, 11 PRINCE ST.
1869.

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The

JOHN JAMES STEWART
COLLECTION

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BY

ALBYN. pseud.

Andrew Shields.

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Tired of the playthings in the afternoon
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225
226

4617 June 27 '19

LETTER TO ELIZA.

From that commanding eminence between
The three-score years and ten, and four-score years,
Whilst pausing in our earthly pilgrimage
And looking back, or haply turning o'er
Such incidents as may observance claim ;
Among the notes upon our tablets seen,
Like leaves promiscuously in Autumn strew'd,
And left around this hermitage of mine ;
Tho' not the best, nor yet the latest made ;
Are found some lessons by experience taught
Which in life's index have no place assign'd,
And with propriety might bear the name
Of miscellaneous on a title page—
As axioms, maxims, inferences ;—few,
But in the generations past and gone,
Would have been treasur'd ; in the present day
Wharf, store or cargo, next to ready cash
Or politics alone attention claim
And take precedence of all else beside.

The scatter'd fragments lie so wide apart,
Some out of reach, and some more out of place,
Or what is worse, perhaps would be no aid

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In garlanding this *souvenir* of ours.
 Not for amusement we daguerreotype,
 But waiving what may seem too dimly traced,
 Nor anxious from oblivion to retrieve
 From what is valid venture to rehearse,
 Or, more correctly, venture to discuss
 What does appear at variance in our creed
 Or prejudice; if not a better phrase,
 Will natively be better understood,
 Which Albyn and Eliza,—both to blame,
 Uncatechised, adopted as their own.
 Pliant, or stubborn, as occasion serves,
 To act, as the ingredients it contains
 Advises urgency, or asks restraint;
 And hence, amidst some chastisement severe,
 May, peradventure, in a solemn hour,
 On reconsideration, eye to eye
 See, that all doubtful disputations are
 Upon the list of the exemptions made
 When christian character is in review,
 And by analogy cannot be less
 In what it is forbidden we should know.
 Envy to me is only known by name,
 And fretfulness has never been my guest,
 Yet in a length of days is much to chafe
 And irritate the meekest of mankind.
 It does not shock the poet's nerves to hear
 That exclamation wrung out of the soul
 So full of pathos in the Psalmist's song

When wanting wings wherewith to fly away
To some far wilderness, and be at rest.

Not thus, Eliza, must our feelings flow,
Tho' not less plaintive if they flow in verse,
But, blending choice with duty, calmly wait
The time appointed ; I am like a child,
Tired of the playthings in the afternoon
That in the morning made him wild with joy,
And more than half a convert have become
Unto that axiom Israel's Monarch penn'd
When he review'd the labours of his life—
That vanity of vanities is the refrain
Of all the noblest hymns of humankind,
And all man's pleasures terminate at last
In the vexation that his spirit feels.
So often cheated, and himself the dupe
Of ev'ry shadow that his fancy weaves,
As one by one, they vanish out of sight.

This truth grates harshly on the youthful ear,
Nor farther entrance is to it allow'd.
Nor less astounding, oft in after years
Until experience, or some startling stroke
Of Providence, divides the gloom around,
And lets a ray of heav'nly sunshine in ;
Then, not till then, we too like Solomon
Look on disgusted, and like him exclaim
That all is vanity beneath the sun.

Beyond the halo that a good name gives,
(That gem a world of rubies cannot buy)

No appetite for earthly things is mine,
 I loathe the verbiage, fashion'd tho' it be
 To suit the taste of would-be amateurs,
 Tagg'd to the title that the Muse bestows,
 And sometimes surreptitiously obtain'd.
 No envious longings lodge within my breast
 To stand upon ambition's dizzy height,
 And look contemptuously on all below,
 And watch the attitude Despair may take
 When disappointment meets them by the way,
 And certifies them that the end is near ;
 Or, leaving little more than shaking hands,
 Hands scarcely less prophetic than those
 The King of Terrors always with him brings;
 Then in the city of the Dead partake,
 Such leasehold as to each may appertain.

Eliza, scion of a fruitful vine,
 In other days, that Albyn call'd his own—
 Drooping, and wilted by a chilling blast,
 (Altho' transplanted in a genial sphere,)
 That found thee like a houseplant fondly nursed,
 Too early to the garden plot transferr'd,
 And the first bud amongst the leaflets seen,
 So promising and pleasant to behold,
 Abruptly swept from the maternal stem.

Less of the poet, than the parent now,
 Tho' apposite such similies may seem,—
 Commingle with the thoughts to which our pen
 Is giving shape and fashion ; do not deem

These lines are pencill'd with a stoic's hand,
 Tho' void of flavour to a critic's taste.
 No leisure ours to harmonize their tones,
 Or modulate the syllables severe,
 Like thine, Eliza; ruthlessly unseal'd,
 With us affection's fountain overflows;
 And lavish of our gladness as our grief,—
 Though we rejoice with them that do rejoice,
 No shame is ours to weep with them that weep.

By some expressions of the crudest kind,
 When reason's atmosphere was overcast,
 And faith bewildered in a wreath of mist,
 Nor distant from the precincts sceptics claim
 As their possession, often dispossess'd,
 And never certain whether right or wrong;
 Nor are their landmarks over-well defined.
 We are admonish'd (not quite free of pain)
 By some unguarded utterances made,
 Which in the anguish of a mother's heart
 The harrow of bereavement prostrate leaves,
 Bleeding and stupified with deep distress,
 Perhaps may palliate, but will not excuse
 Such hopelessness as Christians must condemn,
 Nor should have entrance into pious minds.

With such ideas immediately in view,
 We ask attention to no idle tales,
 But consolation that the Gospel gives,
 Suggestive of our acquiescence now,
 In wisdom infinite, and far beyond

What sinful, erring creatures comprehend ;
And through a glass is only darkly seen.

Ah ! why indulge in questionings, or worse
Keep vascilating between yea and nay,
Certain in part, but more to doubting prone.
If in the spirit land departed friends
Have knowledge still of what is said and done
Amongst us—their companions left behind.

Are we not in the Sacred volume told,
And is it not unchallenged on record ?
That a great cloud of witnesses are ours,
The best and earnest of the human race,
Were compassing the Hebrew saints about
In Apostolic days, say then, why not
For us a similar employment find,
And tho' not always visible, oft times
Are we made conscious of a presence near
That has a hallowing influence on our souls
And makes the atmosphere around us sweet.

Deem not such witnesses can ever be
Spectators idle, or without an aim ;
Could Abel, Enoch, Noah, or God's friend,
The faithful Abr'ham, or those shining ones,
Famous when living, and illustrious dead,
Without some special purpose tarry there—
But not the tottering of earthly thrones,
Or empires perilous, or sceptres lost,
Or sickly dynasties would them entice,
To visit worlds of sordidness and sin,

Only to blush,—if souls departed can
Blush, for the wickedness they would behold.

With all the scholarship St. Paul possessed,
And none his education will dispute,
He does not undertake to say what size,
Or to his vision, how the cloud appear'd ;
But mark the language that he has employ'd
“ *So great a cloud !* ” and all of witnesses.
How full of meaning is that little word,
That “ *so* ” in our salvation overflows,
And O how soothing to the sinful soul
in that amazing passage where we read
That God “ *so* ” loved the world, He gave His Son
To be a ransom for a ruin'd race.

What do they witness? trembling on the lips
Of many a childless mother may be now
'Twixt hope and fear unutterable found,
Lest ev'n what hope they have be swept away ;
Or that their fears, unwelcome as they are
In the response more amplitude assume.
But in their bosoms, hidden tho' they be,
Anxieties and longings find a place,
To know if all in mem'ry held so dear,
Perhaps a fav'rite or a first-born child,
Assurance safely might be entertain'd
'hat in their anguish, altho' unaware,
o gulf impassable is fixed between
e filial effluence when death's signet's set
^ all the love within a mother's heart.

How do they witness? Some fond mother's sob
 Forbidding utterance to her lips, enquires.
 The weeping eyes in sympathy sincere,
 Without reluctance seconds the demand ;
 An empty cradle, or perhaps the toys
 Piled in the corner of a little crib,
 Tho' mute, become interpreters and there
 Considerations favourable claim,
 And tho' disposed to pathos, yet how strange
 The tremor that arrests the poet's hand,
 And in a pause, the pencil seems to own,
 Or caligraphs where sorrowing is seen.

Why do they witness? Ah, that heartfelt throb
 Does touch a tender spot, and from repose
 Awakes emotions that we ill can hide,
 That overleap the barrier time has set
 And distance has been wanting to make void.
 Lo ! what resistless eloquence is in
 The tears of sorrow by a mother shed,
 As still some token of the past recalls
 The recollections of her buried babe,
 Unchanged to her imagination now
 As when it fell beneath the spoiler's shaft,
 Tho' dust for years, has unto dust return'd.

Of knowledge less desirous, than evade
 Too keen observance, o'er and o'er again
 With little variance, is the query made,
 Why do they witness? and for what intent.
 Do they as spies and sentinels become

On our department? over curious more
 Than requisite, has prompted the demand,
 Nor haply is unanswerable found,
 Nor in the present instance is unapt
 And pencill'd down unstudied as it comes.

In Holy Writ, where revelation ends
 Enquiry is no further to be made—
 No rash assertions can acceptance find
 Among the theories we entertain;
 But, void of violence to common sense,
 Nor wanting reverence we may suppose
 If inaccessible our thoughts be found
 At least our actions open to them lie
 And what indulgence, or denials share
 As we are passing through this vale of tears.

Go faithless one, and unbelieving, still
 Eliza mine, and wander forth alone
 At twilight hour to some secluded spot,
 None more secluded than the groves of green
 That mantle o'er the Dartmouth heights and holms.
 Nay, do not ask, 'tis useless to enquire
 In what direction should the stroll begin,—
 It is not possible to go astray;
 But if your steps should east or southward tend,
 It will be vain to linger long beside
 That pile on the triangle left between
 The thoroughfares that pass it either way,
 On this and that side, Priest and Levite-like;
 Enough for them that it is there, alone,

Half stupified at least, if not half dead,
 By adding *to*, more than by taking *from*—
 A thing divided parentage can boast
 In dubious pedigree between them placed,
 Waiting some good Samaritan to shew,
 If not his love, another sister grace
 Perhaps bestow,—Oh, charitable deed,
 Even tho' but fastened like fig-leaves, *pro tem*,
 Some appellation on it, worth *two pence*.

No extra exercise that can fatigue
 Needs to be levied on your limbs, before
 Another orphanage of humbler aim
 May claim attention, but does not invite ;
 Morose in countenance, tho' not unkind,
 And in appearance, of a *beauish* caste,
 When pass'd forgotten, nothing intervenes
 Until a "clearing" may the eye arrest
 Where the "Belle Cottage," stands in plebian pride
 Upon a rising, not aspiring height—
 And more pretending in its equipage
 Set *vis-a-vis* conspicuous, the "Wolf's den,"
 A habitation of a hopeful kind,
 But like a Dutchman's garden, more for use
 Than ornament, it has no vacant space
 Whereon to rest or rusticate a while.

There apathy no longer holds the sway
 But interest more ardently leads on,
 Till unawares, your footsteps may be found
 On Mount Amelia at the close of day

As the last sunbeams on "Chebucto" shine;
 Where the Recluse and Amateur alike
 In the diversities that each require
 Can have their longings gratified for once.
 However high their expectations rise,
 Beyond them all the promise is fulfilled
 The primal features of creation's face
 There suffers little from the touch of time,
 Save where disfigured by the hand of man.

The fowler's feet forbidden there to tread,
 His avocation no beginning finds
 In slaughtering the denizens of song.
 But ev'ry vested privilege is theirs
 By right divine, confirm'd by special grace,
 Not terrified when visitors advance,
 Nor fly away, but folding up their wings
 To chirp a cheerful salutation, wait
 Or serenade them with a native ode.

More reticent, the rambling Rabbit starts
 As you approach, and opens up her eyes
 Like, hesitating, if you come too near,
 To what results the interview may lead.
 The coward creature always is found shy
 To cultivate acquaintanceship so close,
 And hops aside a little to look round,
 Or in a quest'ning attitude enquires
 If a reception safely she may risk;
 And when not satisfied, more distance still
 May place between her frontispiece and yours,

Or out of sight into the covert crouch.

A thriving colony of friendly squirrels
Among the rabbit family reside,
Versed in the modes of rural etiquette
On strangers thro' the sylvan suburbs tend
And chatt'ring loud, officiously polite
Court observation by their quaint address.
Some compliments that never have an end,
And quenchless curiosity is theirs
Like Frenchmen, equally both tongue and hands
Accouchers in their comedies are made.

Or, by the margin of the "Maynard Lake,"
A polish'd mirror, of the purest plate
For photographs in Nature's studio set
Where likenesses are taken day and night.
But, what to you more interesting still
Balmy, and bright, and beautiful, the nurse
Of half the folly that bear's Albyn's name.

Or, should your loiterings to the "Brookhouse" lead
Instruction there is giv'n without a fee,
Instruction fitted to remind the old
But more emphatically warn the young
How transitory their sojourn is here.
There modesty and meekness, strangers both,
Would count upon the super extra list
As out of place, if they should chance to call,
Not mingle, in the revelry and mirth,
Or be spectators of the orgies there
A silent, solitary, sad abode.

A foundling brook of questionable birth
 If filiated ; North and South might claim
 To each related, and by each disown'd ;
 A wretched swamp, obliging to them both,
 As foster-mother, feeds it for a while,
 Bound to the task by favour less than force.
 And when the outcast wanders forth alone,
 Feeble and fretful even when at play,
 A dwarfish thing, that did not care to grow,
 Disposed to sulk and idle half the time,
 Nor void of viciousness when more mature ;
 It swept a trench into the bank above
 And diligent, or desp'rate at the task
 Ere ugliness donn'd in the picturesque
 Became a Boscage, such as Nature owns.
 In that the vagrant vixen disappear'd,
 And where it brawl'd a lively laughing stream,
 Was in a costume of another caste
 Seen through the shrubb'ry in amusing moods,
 Flaunting in ev'ry fascinating form
 The most imposing, Rapids and Cascades ;
 Or flush of fun, would skip from rock to rock
 Restless and rogueish, in its matchless airs
 And not averse to share mischievous deeds
 When floods and freshets flung them in the way.
 No prude,—vivacious, violent at times,
 Agile in motion, —in adventure bold,
 And entertaining unto curious crowds.
 Affronted by some innovations made,

Upon the liberty there long enjoyed ;
 And of all pristine honours dispossess'd,
 In the coarse garb of servitude attir'd,
 Lately the charmer vanish'd out of view,
 And left the " Brookhouse " in the pouts behind.

Divided from it by a narrow lane,
 That narrow lane upon the public palm'd,
 As the broad street that tith'd the Province chest
 May be mistaken for an ill-made drain,
 Unfinish'd left on the contractor's hands,
 And destitute of engineering skill.

Behind a hedge-row scantily esconced
 Beside *that* lane the monument is seen,
 Where Elegance was murder'd long ago.
 A humpback'd hovel once did mark the spot ;
 A cottage *that* became, and it is now
 Something, (to aggravate the murder more,)
 Without resemblance to aught else on earth.
 Some crude ideas the situation shews,
 Some aspirations adverse fate controls ;
 Nothing original, except the style,
 Ornate in front, all else an olio seems—
 As some atonement for the reckless deed
 (The reckless deed can not be all atoned).
 Content is seen domesticated there,
 Rejoicing in the term of " Sunnyside."

As there is no seclusion there, delay
 Must be forbidden at this early stage,
 Nor listen when indulgence would persuade ;

If southwardly, the walk be lengthened out,
 And all around is hush'd,—it may be well
 To loiter slowly passing thro' "Beechgrove,"
 And note the mansion in the quiet copse;
 The very index of the owner's taste,
 So quaint without, and classical within.
 A nest,—from capital to quoin unique,—
 There is no room for criticism left,
 In such a haunt might happiness be made
 A daily guest, if not a bosom friend.

Arriving at an opening in the woods
 Upon the left, turn up the crooked path
 Tortuous, and twisting thro' among the trees
 Unto "Balmoral;" buried out of sight,
 Strange paradox, tho' planted on a hill
 Almost forgotten that it had a name.
 Care and tranquility, divided long,
 There in companionship are closely bound;
 Comfort and kindness, amiable pair,
 Like sister-twins, attendants on them wait
 Nor needs a wish to be repeated twice,
 A lonely lodge for meditation meet,
 And wake the soul to commune with itself.

Or less retired to wander o'er "Woodside,"
 Woodside! we pen it with a solemn sigh—
 Woodside! not now to us the Woodside when
 It gave us welcome in departed days.
 The very fields have lost their laughing look,
 And all the forest sighs in mournful tone.

No monument there vanity requires,
 No pillar to commemorate its time;
 The residue of baubles that have been
 Those decoys fatal to enthusiast souls,
 That promise more than ever was enjoy'd;
 The pride of life in ruins flung aside,
 The brevity of earthly bliss denotes,
 And written on them legible is seen,
 Emphatic more than eloquence can aid
 An useful lesson, though not often conn'd;
 Even when transferr'd unto the poet's page,
There read in vain,—if ever read at all.

Amused, perhaps admonish'd by the way
 The mind, of some embarrassment set free,
 Allows the eyes more leisure for a glance,
 When wending homeward in the twilight hour,—
 Or by the moonlight streaming thro' the trees,—
 A passing glimpse of "Fernwood" may be got;
 A passing glimpse exhausts the glories there,
 Nor leaves one relic to remembrance dear.

Above "Mount Pleasant" now the stars do shine,
 But only shew what shadows on it rest,
 What pleasures there are to the name confined,
 Nor does it now so prepossessing seem
 As to our youthful fancy long ago,
 Yet from the poet friendship claims a tear,
 The tribute trifling, but sincerely paid.
 Yes, friendship once with Henry Mott was mine,
 And intimate insensibly became,

Nor in it ever had a jar been felt
 That could disquiet for an hour create
 Ere envious death dissolved the fragile tie
 And made another loved illusion void.

What strange sensations fluctuate between
 Our sympathies and admiration when
 We reach the precincts compassing around
 The sacred edifice that crowns "Mount Hope."

How adoration flutters in the soul,
 Extensive more than language can express.
 Instinctively our aspirations rise,
 Grateful and glowing, up before the throne
 Of Him in whom we live, and move, and breathe
 That Reason, estimable beyond price,
 Insulted often, and with anguish wrung,
 Or wantonly abused, without remorse
 In instances innumerable :—still
 We are permitted to enjoy the gift,
 All gifts so ill-deserving to enjoy.

O deprivation, sad in the extreme
 To have the guardian of the soul made dim,
 Or underneath a cloud of darkness hid,
 And wander blindfold in a world of ill !
 How rich the recompense shall be to them
 Who will alleviate such distress as theirs.

How many bland associations might
 Commingle with your meditations there,
 But, the "Insane Asylum" is no place
 To tarry now Eliza ; when 'tis night

Much to make glad, exhilarate, delight,
And from the languid listlessness discard,
Admits postponement till a happier hour.

There is *that* watch-tower by the waters' edge,
A homestead and a hermitage in one,
Two-fold the title unto it belongs
Erst "Babcock's Folly,"—"Woodburn Cottage," now
Provisionally *that*, and this conferr'd
Nor more euphonious, but imposing more,
Allows the upper crust to loom at large
Where pride and prudence have their feud forgot
And in love's fetters, bride and bridegroom-like,
A neve-rwaning honeymoon enjoy.

Besides, *en passant* by the way-side sown
There is a hamlet of a hybrid type,
The partly cabin, partly cottage mould,
Like half a village, just at random flung.
But parley not with passengers who share,
The stillness of a summer's ev'ning stroll,
Until a structure bathed in the moonlight,
From peak to pedestal in silver shines;
Where the spectator,—in amazement lost,—
Veil'd in the gothic and grotesque, beholds
Another version there of "Sunnyside,"
Which, if secluded, 'tis seclusion meet,
To pamper pride, more than refresh the mind.

Or should the North more apposite be deem'd,
Some pleasing walks are in the presincts found,
The air delicious if the hills be high.

But do avoid the "Devil's Elbow bridge,"
 Nor be found near "Gorrillaville" alone,
 (Altho' the demon has been dispossess'd ;)
 That fit receptacle of filth and froth,
 Excusable the absence of all else,—
 All else polluted that would palter there.

Diverging westward where the lane allows,
 (A *lane* in Dartmouth passes for a street,)
 Could witchcraft be, this were a witching scene ;
 The adopted Daughter of the Dartmouth Lake,
 Before you cradled in the naked copse,
 Starts from its slumbers as the playful breeze
 Stoops down and leaves upon the placid cheek
 A loving kiss, acknowledged in a smile,
 That o'er the fair face quivers with delight :
 Nor does a sigh disturb the stillness there.

Upon the zephyrs from Rose Cottage, now
 Commingled with the falling dew, is borne
 Odors soft, breathing o'er the sloping bank—
 Nameless—as the twin domiciles that mute.
 Beside the margin of the woods are set,
 Where both utility and taste for once,
 Tho' oft discarded from the Dartmouth hills,
 Have found the welcome of familiar friends,
 And countenanced, if not consulted too.

Nor less the fragrance in the "Avenue,"—
 That Avenue a "Vallambrosa shade,"
 Small the edition, but in faultless form,—
 Sacred to friendship, and to Tempest's name ;

How long unchanged amidst forgetfulness,
 In memory that dear retreat abides.
 For *us* delight was ever waiting there
 So cool, so calm, invigorating, sweet.
 On to the "Brae" the bashfullest beguiles;
 The "Brae!" how soft it sounds in Albyn's ear
 As if some echo of the past awoke
 Like lightning flashing o'er the Poet's soul
 Into a moment had an age compressed—
 The "Brae!" that picture of domestic bliss
 A rural villa, on a splendid site.

Secure the partridge o'er her infant brood
 In the surrounding thicket nestles down,
 Or fearless, (in her fond pursuit) of ill,
 She leads them out at eve to take a stroll.

But should her eye detect the felon hawk
 Poised in the air, preparing for a pounce,
 A smother'd click and trailing wings make known
 Such peril nigh, the picture is reversed
 Like falling rain the little feet are heard
 Tripping in haste to hide among the leaves,
 The maple leaves that seem to plume themselves
 Less on the patronage that they possess
 Than in the manner it can be applied;
 No bye and byes that may enhance the boon
 Is requisite to prompt a gen'rous act,
 But pleased to aid the puny protegees
 Drop round about them, motionless and mute.

And earliest of the visitors in spring
 The "Robin" always comes to get his lunch,
 Nor ever is his confidence misplaced,
 Among the feather'd tribes *there* not one shares
 A kinder welcome than the robin greets.

There too, the "Woodcock" shy as he appears,
 Has made acquaintance with the poultry pen—
 Without a dial, knows the feeding hour
 And from his ambush in the neighb'ring brake
 Comes uninvited, bides his time, and then
 Slips in among the chickens for his crumb.

But pleasing as this portrait may appear,
 'Tis not the Eden once, ere birthright ours
 A dark vignette upon the obverse side
 The universal "*bubblyjock*" displays,
 But, in an alter'd form; A large black "dog,"
 Fierce, and unmuzzled, prowling up and down
 About the premises by day and night,
 Whether of mastiff, or, of mingled breed,
 Alike the terror of both ill and good,
 The sleepless despot does his duty well.

Something less tangible has often made
 In Scotland's ballad days, and even now
 Between the Cheviot and the Vale of Tweed
 A good foundation, whereon to begin
 A fab'lous creature of the devil-kind
 And in some neighbourhoods, say up the Jed
 On Oxnam's, or the banks of Cale, it might
 Among the simple peasantry become

By oft repeating o'er his acts and deeds
 A prodigy of fearful size and shape ;
 Perhaps be furnish'd with more heads than one,
 And dignified with horns, the eyes of fire,
 A foaming mouth, and teeth to correspond ;
 The colour countenancing the idea—
 Besides, his rash, and ruffian-like address
 The newest version of the Scottish "*Deil*."

In beautiful and calm repose is seen
 A lovely Landscape stretching from the "*Brae*"
 Th' enthusiast's eye untiring travels o'er,
 Made luminous as the departing glance
 Of sunlight shines on mount and minaret,
 On pediments, and pinnacles and spires,
 On churches, chapels, cupolas, *chateaus*
 And humble dwellings dotting all around,
 Ashamed to own what soubriquets they bear.
 Or incognitas, veil'd in various forms,
 Yet not indifferent unto disregard,
Built to the manor, but *unmaner'd* yet
 As is an Indian wigwam in the woods
 All in this brief biography comprised,
It is some place, wherein some person lives.

Distinguishable from the cliffs and crags
 So dimly seen along the distant coast,
 Bristling above the billows high and hoar,
 Beyond the Falkland village proudly placed
 Britannia's bulwark, towers on Camperdown,
 Stript of its shadow ev'ry day at noon

It still the tidings from afar unfolds
 With eyes when open like the lightning's glare,
 And in a tone, loud as a thunder peal
 Of questionable Characters, demands
 The import of their errands, ere they dare
 Presumptively to touch our sacred soil,
 The sacred soil that Nova Scotian's tread,
 The sacred soil of England's sacred Queen.

Verse fails to furnish all the rapture felt
 When gazing onward where the ocean rolls
 Far out at sea, just visible—not more,
 Against the horizon a cloud appears,
 To curl in darker or in lighter shades
 Is the unerring telegram that tells
 Of a Cunarder crushing thro' the waves
 Like a live creature of a curious mould
 And longing for the cheer greets her return.

An outward bound is in the offing seen
 To court the breeze with all her canvas spread,
 God speed the voyage, leaps up from the heart
 Nor waits for words to waft the pray'r on high
 Ere from the lips unconsciously it 'scapes
 Tho' ev'ry hour the spectacle be new.

Upon an arm between the sea and land
 Thrown naked o'er Chebucto's throbbing breast,
 Like a huge hogshead tumbled upon end,
 A darkish, dwarfish, shapeless looking thing;
 And squat in attitude the Lighthouse stands,
 Its value not to comeliness confined,

A precious gem in a rough casket set,
 There oft the mariner, when tempest toss'd,
 Looks for salvation from a wat'ry grave.
 But how suggestive, why should Albyn say?

More cherish'd feelings in the bosom stir
 Nor is the charm of an Ephem'ral kind,
 Altho' from us no worship they have won
 Yet do they merit much of our regard,
 What time their summer ornaments are on
 Those islands, folded in Chebucto's arms
 "St. George's"—like a baby hush'd asleep,
 But when awake can shew Britannia's breed,
 The charming child is all forgotten then,
 "McNab's"—more of the matron than the maid,
 Simple, sedate, and sisterly in mien,
 Inclined to negligence in the attire
 With some attention to the present style
 Chignon, and plumes, and parasol of green,
 Albeit the dress is awkwardly design'd
 The tidy skirt not dragging in the dust
 (A fav'rite philter with the modern belles
 Where depth in mud their claim to caste defines)
 And shows whoe'er is implicated there
 Extravagance has not the artiste been.

Bold in address—tho' bashful to begin,
 And partly termagant when rudely touch'd
 Nor waives redress when it is requisite
 Until forbearance criminal become.
 But, as a pleasant, unpretending dame

For quiet more than quarrelling disposed,
 Concealment seeks behind the bluff whereon
 "Fort Clarence," quite a vet'ran volunteer,
 With aspect stern, stands guardian o'er them both.

Uncertain what reception they might find
 A flock of curlews quiv'ring on the wing
 Between them huddled in confusion fly,
 As if selecting some auspicious spot
 Wherein in secrecy they might descend
 And rest their pinions for a little while.
 One moment lagging, weary like and low,
 Preparing on the landwash to alight;
 Another—hov'ring higher in the air
 Till a more careful scrutiny is made
 As if aware some stratagem unseen
 The fowlers there have for their ruin hid
 Disastrously accomplishing the end
 As oft the few that fly away confess,
 Nor less the evidence they leave behind
 In dead and dying strew'd along the strand.

Advent'rous vessels flitting to and fro
 Like winged insects of a larger type,—
 The "Beach" whereon the lazy Indians lounge,
 Their sluggard lair too far off in the bush.
 One frail canoe—the only that moves
 Beside them stranding on the shelving shore—
 The jutting headlands, and the creeks and coves
 Where the papooses lave their naked limbs,
 Unto the picture gives a pleasing grace,
 And almost audibly breathes *this is home*.

Adjacent stands, embosom'd in the wood,
 A little structure of the simplest kind,
There calls for rev'rence, and commands respect;
 Where Afric's sons and daughters may be seen,
 Of ev'ry shade, between the two extremes
 Of dark and light, upon the Sabbath day,
 Pious and prayerful, fervently engaged
 In solemn worship, with an earnestness
 That might create confusion in the minds
 And make more favour'd Christians blush with shame.
 Nor is their "Bethel" less the house of God
 And gate of heav'n, than where the Patriarch slept
 And made his pillow witness to his vow;
 When Angels (what a lesson to mankind,
 On us Eliza let it not be lost),
 A retinue from glory—sentinels
 (How low in our esteem) kept watch by night
 O'er Jacob's couch, that couch the naked ground.

Returning thence, when tempted on so far,
 If wearied by the walk, and night's dim shades
 Begin to gather; rest beside the "Rill,"
 That from an op'ning in the mountaint
 (Unknown to fame the title that it bears
 Or only known—its native *nome de plume*)
 Comes down at leizure creeping through the glade
 Silent and sluggish in its youthful mood;
 Almost too lazy to keep lagging on,
 And at the best to idleness inclined,
 It gives no promise what it will become.

A nameless urchin, till it gushes out
 Limpid and lavish on the highway side :
 Childlike and charming in its sportive glee ;
 No girl so graceful in her teens can boast
 One-half the tribute to her beauty paid,
 And universally admitted just.
 Cheerful and chatty, as a modern belle,
 And quite as void of bashfulness it smiles
 Unveil'd, the vestal admiration asks,
 And whilst it captivates the careless eye,
 The little Coquette runs away to hide
 Beneath the foliage of the fleecy ferns.

Extensive as the invitation seems
 The choice could be extended further still,
 As on a map, correct in some details,
 The prominent are only pointed out,
 And vacancies for filling in are left,
 For lesser local illustrations there.
 The beautiful, the picturesque and all,
 Those features finest in the artist's eyes,
 Cannot be in a small edition set.
 So in this outline rapidly run o'er
 The narrow compass that we travel in
 Allows no finish'd touches to be seen.

Yes, go Eliza, errands such as yours
 No guide requires, much less loquacious friend ;
 Officious kindness is far out of place
 When Silence slumbers in the summer eve,
 And not a breath the aspen leaflet stirs.

Not to recall the sorrows of the past,
 Nor nurse the anguish in your bosom hid ;
 But with a heart attuned to solemn thought
 Upon the dispensations that have been
 By Providence apportioned to your lot,
 Tranquil or adverse as they may appear,
 Gracious alike in chastisement or love,
 By an unerring Benefactor given.

O, is there not in such a blissful hour,
 If such an hour you ever have enjoy'd,
 Some indescribable sensations felt,—
 Something mysterious, and not all of earth
 And scarcely dubious if it be of heaven ?
 Do we not then in some etherial way
 Unmeet for utterance to mortal men
 At least, unmeet to be repeated now
 Bring back impressions of a purer kind
 Than what to natures such as ours belong.

Ah ! none can tell how thin the film may be
 That separates the seen from the unseen,
 Or unto what extent the unclothed are
 Familiar with our ev'ry day pursuits.
 Or, if the souls removed from hence possess
 More attributes than when sojourning here ;
 Or, when divested of their earthly house
 If more commanding faculties they share ;
 Or what attention it is theirs to give
 The loved associates that remain behind.

Is it all fancy, or a waking dream,
 Those breathings heard, almost to silence hush'd,
 A mother's ear has startled when alone,
 As if the voice, nay, more, the very tone,
 And in an accent unto her so dear
 Had at her knee "mamma," in whispers said.
 Perhaps such ear, Eliza, was thine own;
 Aye, and the whispers audible to you
 Have been the lispings of your lovely boy.
 And who can tell how frequently in tears
 Such audience of your Henry is enjoy'd.

On me persuasion would be flung away
 That no communion with that cloud may be—
 Nor overshadowing; frequently intense
 Creating longings in this soul of mine;
 From that "great cloud of witnesses" arise
 And who can tell how efficacious still
 Amidst life's trials and vicissitudes,
 That such a clause in our poetic creed
 May stimulate to action,—or restrain.
 To some this may a fruitful topic seem
 Where ample scope is found to revel in,
 Th' impious, and the ignorant, who dare,
 And more than both, the infidels presume
 In wantonness the Scriptures to construe,
 And to their own destruction give them shape:
 Such shape as ill-becomes a sacred theme.

In our belief there is no vacant space
 Where superstition may concealment find,

Nor welcome in our countenance is seen
 For apparitions, ghosts, or spectres wan ;
 Or any of that legendary horde
 Of visitants that poets feign return
 From the abodes of misery and bliss,
 Or some imaginary tract between :
 In a locality that has no bounds,
 Where only the unpurified have place ;
 And without license wander up and down,
 Restless, malevolent, and cursed, besides
 Designing ill and sometimes even more ;
 Accomplishing it, too, when darkness reigns,
 As ignorance or error gives them scope,
 And for a recompense they bear the blame
 That often should to recklessness belong.

The time has been, nor is it quite forgot,
 When verse enthusiasts in their vag'ries wove
 Such airy fantasies, and gave them haunts
 Unpeopled, else in lone sequester'd spots
 In crumbling castles, and in Border Keeps,
 Dilapidated camps, and ruin'd towers ;
 Or not unfrequently a battle-field,
 Or old church-yard they occupied by night ;
 Forsaken mansions of the feudal chiefs ;
 Or solitary mounds o'er martyrs raised.
 Nor could a ripple, or a running brook
 Be found without a fancied guardian's care.
 Nor were they of a habitation choice,
 As not a glen, or cairn, or crag, or cleugh,

But by possession was become their own,
 Wherein to rusticate, what time the moon
 Delights to flirt among the fleecy clouds.
 Or to the landscape in the autumn eve
 Gives loveliness, as light and shadow blend
 And cataracts made hoarse with boistrous glee
 From close confinement prodigal become,
 The echoes startle out of calm repose
 To join the chorus in the hymn of night.

Various their grades, and various their employ
 As special labours, special agents claim,
 But all illusive, melting out of sight
 Like wreathes of mist before a fervent sun,
 Those wreathes of mist we have so oft admired
 Which in the fond embrace of Silence wrapt
 Lie hush'd asleep on Mount Amelia's breast,
 Until awaken'd by the kiss of morn,
 When blushing to be openly exposed
 Wait not to share the smile of coming day,
 But courts concealment from the leafy trees
 Or fainting fall in dewdrops all around.

Such the originals from whence have sprung
 Those gross absurdities of fiendish type
 Poetic splendour only can allow
 And banishment their most becoming meed
 They 'wake discordance in the sweetest lines
 That Scottish minstrelsy has ever breath'd.
 Who is he now their services can boast
 Since "Abbotsford" was desolate, and none

At "Altrive Lake" to praise their labours, left,
 Or bid such myths in border ballads live?
 Drunkards and dastards at the midnight hour
 Most frequently have their acquaintance made,
 But hitherto has noonday kept between
 Your Poet's vision in his walking dreams,
 And demons so diminutive as these,
 Hence unfamiliar with the vagrant brood,
 And careless of the company they keep,
 We're not at *home* for once if they should call.

'Mongst the recesses where such hives are hatched,
 None may precedence claim of Richerscleugh,
 (Tho' less a genii than a gipsey haunt)
 More fear'd than famous in the goblin days,
 Albeit in fiction it has found no place
 Quite wanting in extravagance and age
 Essential both to make a monstrous lie
 Tho' the Maelstrom on the Norwegian coast
 Could never give the mariners more dread
 Than travellers by Richerscleugh have felt
 Where fifteen generations the Kame-burn
 (A tributary of the Sylvan Jed)
 Has worn a passage through the rocky soil,
 Forbidding, dangerous, and dark and deep,
 Where not a sunbeam pierces thro' the gloom,
 And ere a storm, terrifically strong
 Is heard a volume of unceasing sounds
 In ev'ry cadence, and of ev'ry kind
 From treble clef, down to the lowest bass,

With all the notes and semi-tones between
 And all at once in fiendish fury peal'd,
 As the wild waters leap from lin to lin,
 Or in distraction dash against the crags,
 Fretted, and foaming in their haste to find
 The shapeless masses choking up their path,
 That daily topple from the bleeding seams,
 Kept desolate as when asunder cleft.
 Or when the thunder shakes the rain-cloud loose,
 And bids it roll in ripples down the hills
 Until the "*burn*," that in the summer brawls,
 Becomes a river redolent of wrath
 Demanding of the niggard gorge more room,
 And dashing onward furiously and fast,
 Leaves desolation as it drives along
 In triumph, bearing to the banks of Jed
 The leafy honours that adorn'd the cleugh.

Or when the currents chafe with long delay
 In creeping through the crevices between
 The broken boulders in their pathway piled,
 Are plowing the foundation placed below,
 Or, as a cauldron of capacious size
 Boils up and bubbles into steam and spray.
 The gath'ring rills that form the uplands gush
 Pour'd o'er, or splashing down the precipice
 In cataracts collect, and crushing on
 From ledge to ledge, relentless, rugged, rash,
 Hurl rocks and rubbish thro' the rough ravine,
 And in derision fling them side by side,

Where gloom and grandeur, lost in loveliness,
 Half cavern and half copse, allows them leave
 (Necessity might influence the plea)
 To wait the coming of another flood.

Out of the chasm with hazels overhung
 Oft fancied conversations can be heard,
 And not a shepherd, from the Carterfell
 To Brundenlaws, or ey'n to Plenderleath,
 But can unriddle the enigmas there.
 And their denouements tho' in symbols wrapt,
 Could in the language of their eyes be read,
 But held disastrous if the human voice
 Should audibly a syllable pronounce,
 The wierd prognostications might unfold.

No similie can aid us in the task,
 Tho' unsolicited, we have assumed
 Of introducing to Eliza's ear
 (Tho' fifty years familiar to our own)
 The endless uproar in that horrid den,
 Or what sensations there unbidden come.

If Photograph'd in miniature by "Chase"
 The shadow of a scimitar would give
 A negative of faultless lineaments
 Except the hilt, if finish'd with a gem
 And extra gashes in the yawning gap—
 But all the hissing, howling, horrid din,
 No fitting representative would find,
 Too cunning these to cross the Atlantic waves,
 And dumb before the transfer could be made,

Or lose their prestige on the passage out
 And have the "Institution" for a coop,
 Or, at Mount Hope a habitation find,

Still, after nightfall carefully 'tis shunn'd
 As the abode of demons in disguise,
 Men that did never cringe to human pride,
 Stern and vindictive to the last degree,
 Were not quite strangers unto certain rites,
 Would from Eliza summon up a smile
 Lest their displeasure might have been incurr'd;
 And once a native ventured to assert
 That when the moon was hid behind a cloud
 He saw a fairy sitting on a bank
 And impudently laughing in his face.

To such a place and such a parentage,
 Wherever Scotland has a gloomy glen,
 The Pantheon of the peasants may be traced.
Some of their Demi-Deities are bold,
 Or sullenly and savagely disposed,
 Untameable, and treacherous, whilst some
 To be domesticated seem inclined,
 And show a kind of friendship of their own,
 Even comprehend what obligations mean,
 Nay, when in peril, it has been supposed
 Malignity awhile was laid aside,
 And sometimes favours delicately done
 As unexpected, as kept unexplain'd
 Acceptable to simple innocence,
 Nor could such nucleus for a rude romance

Be found so fitting for the mountaineers
 And always pleasing, if not always new,
 The *beau ideal* of the Border tales
 Among the rustic cottagers became,
 Nursed by repeating into shapes mature
 And oft rehearsed, their actions like themselves
 Were multiplied as the narrator felt
 How much the crowds that listened could digest,
 Or audiences more courteous might require
 Till "Richercleughs" were by the peasants held
 As vast and various as the Scottish clans.

 If obligation to apologize
 For this digression (long we must allow,
 Besides its being almost out of place)
 Eliza, seldom critical, desire,
 The simple truth will suit the purpose best,
 Nor difficult in verse like ours to tell.

 Much less enamour'd of the *Kelpie* cleugh
 Than of its rich associations fond
 As in a cemetery—where the dead
 Have their remembrance chisell'd on the stones,
 And lest the living should their freaks forget
 Laconic legends, coupled with their names
 Or some device, or epitaph is charged
 In after times to publish their exploits.
 We may revisit in remoter years
 And as the tablets one by one are read,
 The loved associates of our youthful days
 Are still our playmates as in long ago.

Peculiar, something unto each pertains
 Delays departure, to another step
 That proves still more attractive than the last,
 And has some token to invite us, where
 Another school-boy, or another girl,
 Perhaps the first we ever blushed to meet :
 And deeper when presumptuously we dared,
 With trembling lips, to leave upon her cheek,
 Her crimson cheek, O, sweet precious dream !
 The futile frenzy of a beardless boy—
 Or half a village, copied from Camptown,
 Before us stands in pardonable pride.
 Nor is one vestige or a visage marr'd
 Tho' in the dross of mem'ry kept conceal'd—
 Hope, crush'd to death, and friendship in the grave
 Love, strangled in the bosom gave it birth
 And flush ambition, fallen, alas how low !
 The over-studious scholar there entomb'd ;
 Mournful, and musing on the records left,
 O, deem not strange such reminiscences might
 To Albyn still be fascinating found ;
 But fascinating more those filial ties
 The best affections of the heart do weave,
 Investing all the sanctities of home.
 Nor are digressions destitute of aim,
 And in a poem have their parts assign'd :
 As Valets of a confidential class
 They have a licence to retreat—advance—
 Or if more opportune, create a pause—

Meantime the subject is proceeding on,
 Tho' unto you like useless episodes,
 Even whilst, as in the present instance seen
 (Tho' not perceptible in every line)
 Illustrating the narrative;—still more
 Leads to the closing paragraph in ours.

Our sympathies do not with theirs accord
 Who desecrate what is to man reveal'd,
 Or prodigally puff it all away,
 As something useless for the present age,
 Or far above our comprehension set,
 And not adapted to our daily walk.
 To verse like ours, tho' oft familiar made,
 Forbidden as a subject too abstruse;
 But, if not terrified, at least we're stunn'd
 By the prophetic ruin that is theirs,
 Who make additions to the word of God,
 Or with devices of their own pollute
 The hallow'd volume of eternal truth;
 And in defiance of the doom pronounced
 Refuse to hear, and criminally bold
 Eggregious folly on its pages pile.

Nor less those plagues shall in their mission fail,
 Without condition threaten'd unto them
 That in perdition claim a higher caste,
 Nor to its inside limits keep confined.
 The over-wise, audaciously profane,
 Who lop away with sacrilegious hand
 What unto them superfluous may appear,

And mutilate the oracles Divine.

Were this a poem, it might finish here,
Or if a sermon it would be too brief;
As it is neither, and yet part of each,
Let me for once be fashionable found,
And as the ladies their epistles write,
Leave what is most important to the last,
Then in a postscript add, as half forgot.

God is our witness ; this assertion asks
No proof, nor of an argument admits,
And since it is without restriction made
Of course is universal in its scope.
Let us be careful how our days are spent,
And have our walk and conversation so
That our position be apart from those
Who by divergence in the path of life
Seem to forget the latitude of heav'n,
And make no due observance of the line
That lies between the broad and narrow way :
Indifferent if trampled out of sight,
In search of shadows far beyond it seen,
Which vanish swifter than is the pursuit ;
Who sit with scorers in the scorner's seat,
Or at the shrine of mammon sacrifice,—
What slender hopes of happiness was theirs.
Or crush out conscience with a weight of gold,
Or do dishonour to a parent's name
To gratify a fiendish appetite ;
As if for them hell were not hot enough,

Calumniate innocence to heat it more,
 Besides the curses that are mingled in
 Their children's prayers—if they ever pray—
 (Nor can the retribution be condemn'd)—
 Will in perdition sink them deeper down,
 And in the presence of assembled worlds,
 Instead of approbation from the Judge,
 Shall have contempt and everlasting shame.

We rest here now,—a patent legal phrase,
 But suits our purpose at the present time,—
 And looking o'er how we have been employ'd,
 It seems as if a Citizen in June
 Had on a jaunt into the country gone
 To rusticate some idle afternoon,
 And accidental, more than by design,
 Had found the way into some flow'ry field,
 A flow'ry field, but more of weeds than flow'rs,
 And tore up right and left whatever came
 The readiest to his hand,—no connoisseur,
 No Flor, Botan, nor Horticultural-ist,—
 Stranger alike to dahlias, fushias, ferns,
 And all the tribe of fashionable names;
 Or flower or weed, to him was all the same,
 Only he knew—or rather he had heard
 Of what sweet odours from the roses came,
 And what perfumes were in the open fields,
 So with a bundle in his kerchief bound
 Returned delighted with his glorious cruise.
 Even so the labour of our love has been

Quite unacquainted with the classic modes
Of wreathing verse in dactyles or spondees,
Or how to fashion by the critic's ken—
All the outlandish and factitious terms
That constitute an epic, or an ode.
To gaudy boquets we make no pretence :
This simple posey the Pierian maids
One day when visiting, with Albyn left
Their office is the daring to adorn
Rather, to soothe the sorrowing be ours.

DARTMOUTH, APRIL 5, 1869.

ALBYN.